

## **Believing is more than seeing (Luke 24:36-48)**

If you have or have had small children or grandchildren you'll be familiar with them trying to tell you something, before grabbing your hand and saying that you need to "come and see".

I think something like this is going on in this passage from Luke's Gospel. Two of Jesus' followers had been walking from Jerusalem to the village of Emmaus. On the road they meet and talk with Jesus. But they only recognise that it was Jesus when they arrived in the village and eat together. Amazed and excited by this encounter they rush back to Jerusalem (some 6 or 7 miles) to tell the disciples. Luke 24:36-48 picks up the story from this point.

We are still on the evening of Easter Sunday. The disciples have been hearing reports about Jesus – Peter and another have confirmed Mary's account that Jesus' body is missing. And then Mary says that she has met with Jesus in the Garden. And now Cleopas and his fellow traveller tell them that they have met Jesus too. It is easy to imagine that the disciples did not know what to think or believe.

It is at the point of time and space that Jesus appears to them in that upper room. The disciples could see Jesus for themselves. But still some thought that he may have been a ghost (verse 37). But Jesus speaks to them about their fears, he invites them to touch him, and he sits down and eats broiled fish with them.

For some **seeing is believing** – they need to see it to believe it. For some it takes more, listening to Jesus' words, touching him ... it is the importance of experience. Personal experience in faith and discipleship can never be underestimated. I was born and brought up in the Methodist Church attending a small village chapel in Kent every Sunday. Looking back I would say that I grew up knowing *what God was*. But it was only after I went to college and had a personal experience of God that *I knew who God is*. And that experience has stayed with me and sustained me up to this day.

But for the disciples who still harboured uncertainty, Jesus takes a second initiative. He reminds them of what he had told them during his earthly ministry, about how everything that has been foretold about him in the Scriptures has been fulfilled, and then he interprets the Scriptures so the disciples can understand.

The use of the Bible isn't about proving the Resurrection, it is about providing the meaning of Jesus' death and resurrection. It is about the fulfilment of God's plans and purposes. Here is the importance of Scripture in our faith and discipleship.

But Jesus doesn't stop there: "Repentance and forgiveness of sins is to be proclaimed in [God's] name to all nations ... You are witnesses of these things" (verses 47, 48).

Sunday 18<sup>th</sup> April 2021

Seeing is believing, and **believing means witnessing**, serving and loving. It is by our words and action – it is through our lives – that we are putting flesh on God's love, God's mercy, God's forgiveness, God's grace.

And being served, being loved takes us back to that sense of experience. You don't know service, you feel served. You don't know love. You feel loved.

Conveying a sense that you are loved by God is the greatest gift and witness that you can give anyone.

Here within these few verses is the pattern of Christian discipleship with Jesus at its centre.

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### **Prayer for the week**

Just as the risen Christ appeared to his disciples,  
bringing them his peace  
and sending them out as witnesses,  
give us the strength, courage and opportunity  
to witness to your life, death and resurrection,  
and the love of God for all people. Amen.

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